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UNFPA HUMAN RESOURCES STRATEGY

Report of the Executive Director

I. INTRODUCTION

1. This report has been prepared in response to decision 2001/16, which requested the Executive Director to submit to the Executive Board at its second regular session 2002, a comprehensive human resources strategy for its approval. It summarizes the key elements of a comprehensive strategy for the management of the human resources of UNFPA that emerged from the transition process that has been under way at UNFPA since mid-2001. The strategy is designed to meet the needs of the organization both in the short-term as well as over the next decade. It therefore responds to the evolving role of the organization in helping developing countries achieve their development goals as well as to the future the Fund envisages for itself and for the goals it is setting out to achieve.

2. As the organization goes through a process of transition, bringing greater focus to its strategic direction and the way in which it fulfills its mandate so that it is able to be flexible and responsive to changing needs, it is equally vital that the strategy be linked to an internal vision for the management of staff. This document defines that internal vision and sets out those policies and practices that will allow UNFPA to attract, develop and retain the staff it needs to implement it.

*The collection and analysis of current data required to present the Executive Board with the most up-to-date information has delayed submission of the present document.

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3. The UNFPA human resources strategy was developed by a working group based on a participatory approach soliciting comments and feedback from management and staff throughout the organization, both at headquarters and in the field. It takes into account the findings and recommendations of the action coordination teams of the Fund's two-year Workforce Planning Exercise (1998-2000), the field needs assessment study conducted in July 2001, and the outcomes of the current transition process. Furthermore, it is based on a comprehensive assessment of best practices inside and outside the United Nations system.

A. Transformational goals of the strategy

4. In order to have a far-reaching and transformational impact, the human resources strategy reaches beyond the traditional boundaries of human resources management and sets goals that address the culture of the organization and support the achievement of its strategic vision. The strategy is designed to achieve six such transformational goals:

(a) Transformation of the organizational culture. The changes proposed in the human resources management policies and systems will take effect only if there is a change in the organizational culture of UNFPA. Real change must come from a change in the behaviour of people, in particular the senior managers of the organization. The strategy therefore aims to create a more open, future-oriented, professional organization that emphasizes innovation, leadership, management, strategic thinking, networking and advocacy, and knowledge sharing and commitment to learning;

(b) Strategic programme leadership. The strategy is closely linked to the programmatic and strategic vision of UNFPA and aims to strengthen the capacity of its representatives and managers to take a strong leadership role in helping countries achieve the goals of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) and the Millennium Declaration, particularly in the areas of promoting policy dialogue and building strategic partnerships;

(c) Excellence through the highest caliber of staff. UNFPA must exercise determination in developing and recruiting the highest caliber of staff who either have, or can readily acquire, the competencies required to meet the evolving needs of the organization. A realignment of the skills and competencies of all staff is imperative, and increased emphasis will be placed on competency development and learning. Moreover, UNFPA will seek out the best available talent from internal and external candidates in order to replenish the organization's human resources;

(d) Managers responsible for human resources management. The strategy foresees that senior managers will be given significant authority in the management of their human resources, thus creating a solid foundation for human resources management throughout the organization. The strategy must therefore be owned by the managers of the organization and its

implementation must be led by them. The Office of Human Resources plays an important role in developing the policies, systems and tools that facilitate human resources management and in providing advice and guidance;

(e) Increased accountability. The proposed strategy includes measures to enhance accountability within the organization. Managers at all levels will be held accountable for delivering results and demonstrating managerial and leadership competencies. Best management practices and standards of behaviour will be integrated in the competency framework and performance management system. This implies zero tolerance of any behaviour unbecoming of international civil servants, harassment of any type, misconduct and poor performance;

(f) A strong focus on the field. The strategy concentrates on supporting UNFPA country operations through a more rational and strategic deployment of human resources throughout the organization, better matching of staff profiles to job requirements, increased staff rotation between headquarters and the field and better human resources planning. Representatives will be given decision-making authority in a number of human resources areas and will be provided with the necessary tools and systems to support this.

B. The cornerstone of the strategy – an organizational competency framework

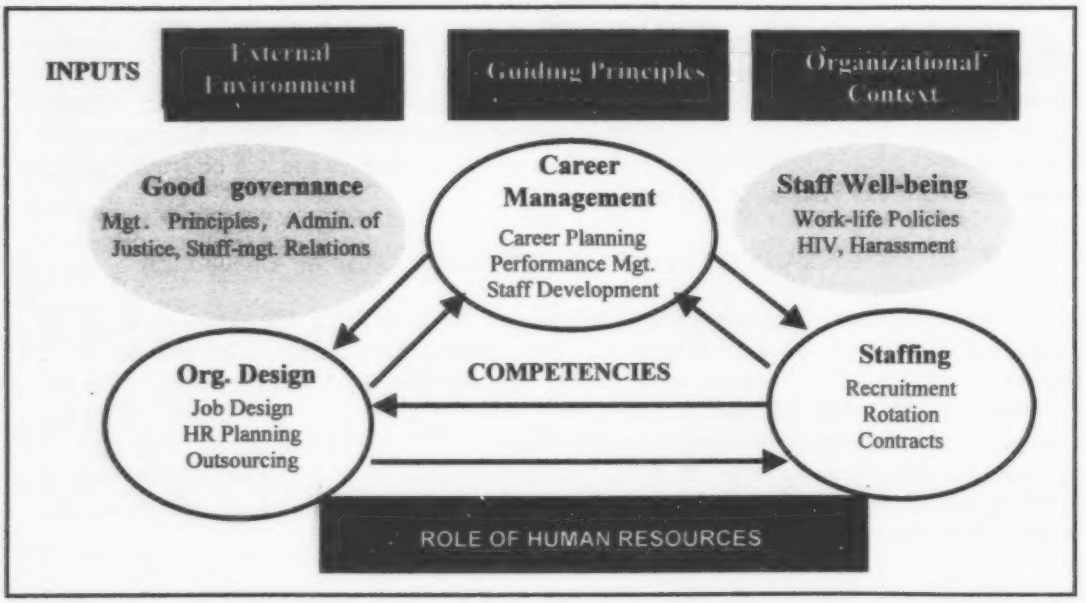
5. The development of a competency framework for UNFPA is the cornerstone of the strategy and is central to its implementation. Once developed, the framework will act as an integrating mechanism for all human resources systems, including performance management and promotion, staff development and learning, recruitment and rotation, and human resources planning. The competency framework will be built around three components: (a) core or generic competencies that will apply to all staff of the organization; (b) managerial competencies that will apply to those in management positions; and (c) specific functional competencies that will apply to the key functional groupings of the organization.

II. PROPOSED FRAMEWORK FOR HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGEMENT WITHIN UNFPA

6. To achieve the transformational goals, the human resources strategy sets out an integrated, holistic framework (as illustrated below) for the management of the human resources of UNFPA. The strategy maps out the need for wide-ranging changes to policies, procedures, mechanisms and systems for career management, staffing and organizational design. To a greater or lesser degree, components of these three key elements already exist within UNFPA. In some cases, the strategy calls for the revision or strengthening of existing policies, practices, and systems; in other cases, it calls for the introduction of new policies and/or practices.

7. The most important innovations inherent to this strategy are: (a) basing all human resources systems of the organization on an organizational competency framework, which will have the effect of integrating the systems; (b) introducing a fully developed career management system, including career planning; (c) linking the performance management system to the achievement of organizational results, and including 360-degree feedback on individual and team performance; and (d) incorporating "learning" and "learning programmes" into staff development.

PROPOSED HUMAN RESOURCES FRAMEWORK



8. The proposed human resources strategy consists of five main components, which are summarized below. They are: (a) career management and development system; (b) staffing; (c) organizational design; (d) good governance; and (e) staff welfare and security.

A. Career management and development system

9. UNFPA does not currently have a clearly defined career management and development system. There are no clearly defined career streams and no mechanisms in place to encourage staff to develop the competencies required for various career streams. For a career management system to be effective, it is important that organizational needs and individual career aspirations converge, resulting in a mutually beneficial relationship between the organization and its employees. The organization has the responsibility for providing the supporting tools and systems and a challenging and enabling environment to ensure that it is able to attract, develop and retain high-quality staff. The three principal components of the career management and development system are career planning, performance management and staff development.

10. The career management system foresees the development of a clear framework for career planning with career streams identified for the functional areas of the organization and clearly defined yardsticks identified for career progression. The system will enable lateral moves within as well as between career streams. Career progression in this system will be based on competencies rather than on seniority and will involve eliminating the distinction between General Service and Professional staff, adopting the International Civil Service Commission (ICSC) standard as its basis. The progression from one level to another will thus be based primarily on a staff member's competencies as determined through competency assessment, in addition to one's academic qualifications. National staff in country offices will be included in the career planning system, taking into account their particular circumstances. The system will also extend beyond career streams in UNFPA, enabling staff to develop their careers within the United Nations system as a whole.

11. The strategy envisions a revised approach to performance management. Performance appraisal will be based on results achieved, competencies developed, and team performance. All work planning will be results-based, and a 360-degree assessment by subordinates, peers and partners will be introduced to provide feedback on staff members' competencies. Performance appraisal will be more directed to learning and competency development, thereby enabling the organization to promote and reward key competencies such as learning and knowledge sharing and to encourage behaviour conducive to improving the overall performance of the organization. Moreover, performance management will be included as a managerial competency in order to enhance the effectiveness of this critical component throughout the organization.

12. The staff development policy will reflect the principles of a learning organization and support the planned progression of staff along various designated career streams. To ensure

continuous learning, the Fund will develop long-term learning programmes in key functional areas as well as in management. Furthermore, a structured programme of coaching and mentoring by managers will be introduced to encourage career development and organizational learning. An important aim of such a continuous learning approach is to move from the development of individuals based on their personal interests to the development of individuals based on organizational needs and the corresponding learning requirements of staff.

B. Staffing

13. The goal of any human resources strategy with regard to staffing is to have the best people in the right posts at the right time, to fill posts in a cost-effective and efficient manner, and to employ and deploy staff in such a way as to allow adequate flexibility for UNFPA to deliver its mandate. The most effective way to achieve this is to use a competency-based approach to match the skills and competencies of staff and external candidates to the profile of the post. Moreover, staffing must be linked to the career management system to ensure that organizational needs and individual career aspirations and personal circumstances are taken into account. The development of an organization-wide skills inventory/workforce profile will be a valuable tool in this respect.

14. A comprehensive set of changes are needed with regard to how staffing is carried out within the organization. This will require the development of a comprehensive staffing policy that includes a more efficient and improved vacancy management system, recruitment process, rotation policy, separation policy and contractual arrangements. Furthermore, the staffing policy will continue to emphasize gender concerns and geographic diversity and explore the use of additional human resources particularly at the junior professional levels.

15. The lack of entry-level positions in the professional category poses a particular challenge for UNFPA in terms of staffing and human resources planning. In order to address this issue, the proposed strategy plans to strengthen the Junior Professional Officer programme, introduce a more structured internship programme, and explore the possibility of establishing a young professionals programme funded from external resources, which will include qualified national officers as well. The strategy also calls for the better and more effective use of United Nations Volunteers (UNVs) and national project personnel to enable UNFPA to meet programme support needs more cost-effectively.

16. The vacancy management system outlines the process through which positions vacated by reassignments and separations are filled. The human resources strategy recommends developing and applying consistent standards for advertising vacancies and defining appropriate processes for screening, short-listing, assessment and decision-making.

17. The rotation policy will make use of competency-based profiles of posts and inventories of staff skills in order to ensure better matching of skills to the requirements of posts. The mandate and operational environment of UNFPA make rotation of international professional staff a necessity. Mobility of staff is therefore an organizational requirement as much as it is an opportunity for professional growth and career progression. The organization should therefore create an environment that encourages and rewards mobility, particularly field assignments, including to hardship duty stations.

18. The proposed strategy requires clear definition and implementation of a rotation policy for international staff in order to encourage mobility from headquarters to the field and vice versa. Rotation will be based on competencies to ensure that the skills of potential candidates match the requirements of the position. The policy will be linked to career development and take full account of career streams in order to assist staff to move through and between these streams.

19. Recruitment will be based on a competency approach and a streamlined and improved recruitment process. It will use assessment tools, with increasing complexity for higher-level posts and with particular attention to Representatives' posts. Principal responsibility and accountability for recruitment will be given to line managers at the branch chief level. The Office of Human Resources will assist and support managers by developing applicable policies, tools and procedures. Moreover, the role of appointments and promotions bodies will become one of monitoring compliance with organizational procedures and guidelines, rather than that of advisory bodies, as is currently the case.

20. Where a mismatch exists between required competencies and available skills that cannot be addressed through retraining and competency development, UNFPA will make use of a separation policy to deal with such situations, including agreed separations. The latter will have budgetary implications and thus must be incorporated into the biennial support budget.

21. UNFPA uses a range of contracting tools with varying degrees of complexity depending on the required length of service and the source of funding. The multitude of contracts is difficult to manage and creates differences in conditions of service between various types of staff. The strategy proposes simplification of contractual arrangements to be used regardless of the funding source. An indefinite or continuing contract should be introduced for staff who have served for between two to five years on fixed-term contracts and are expected to continue their assignment beyond five years. This modality would replace the permanent contract. A fixed-term contract would be given for assignments for one year and up to five years. The use of SSAs will be retained for short-term assignments up to eleven months; however, their use will be monitored more closely. UNFPA will coordinate its efforts with other United Nations organizations with regard to developments in contractual arrangements.

C. Organizational design

22. The elements of the human resources strategy need to be grounded on a solid platform, one that ensures their smooth and efficient functioning. Organizational design provides that platform. The strategy proposes actions in three areas: job design and classification; the development of a human resources planning function; and a review of the human resources services provided to UNFPA, including its current arrangements with UNDP, as well as options for outsourcing.

23. The development and use of generic job descriptions will be based on functional requirements and the organizational structure at headquarters and on the country office typology in the field. The strategy also proposes to consider the introduction of broad banding (i.e., the banding together of two or more levels) as envisaged by the ICSC.

24. The strategy recommends the introduction of a human resources planning function within the Office of Human Resources. Human resources planning will be based on the competency framework, which reflects organizational needs, as well as on a skills/competency inventory of staff. The Office of Human Resources will carry out succession planning, assisting staff in acquiring the competencies needed to meet current and evolving organizational objectives and developing staffing models for planning recruitment activities, based on current trends.

D. Good governance

25. Effective governance/management of the organization is fundamental to the implementation of an effective human resources strategy. The policies, procedures and mechanisms proposed in this document will not have a significant impact on the organization if good governance is not in place. As such, the strategy aims to establish a set of brief but clear management principles that define a code of conduct as well as responsibilities and accountability for all managers; a process of individual coaching as the principal development tool for senior managers; and the introduction of formal mechanisms for conflict resolution and staff-management relations.

E. Staff welfare and security

26. Staff welfare and security are organizational goals that aim at ensuring that staff members have appropriate levels of support to function effectively, within the limited resources of the organization; that staff members feel valued and respected; and that they are not placed in situations of unacceptable risk. Clear policies and processes will be developed so that staff members know what is expected of them and what they can expect from UNFPA, especially in situations of conflict, risk or contention.

III. GUIDING PRINCIPLES AND STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION

27. An organization's human resources strategy must be built on a foundation of principles that guide the management of its most valuable resource – its staff. Six such principles will guide the management of human resources at UNFPA: (a) transparency of policies, processes and practices; (b) competency as the primary tool for recruitment, reassignment and promotion; (c) focus on team performance; (d) staff dignity and confidentiality; (e) sensitivity to the unique requirements of staff members; and (f) flexibility and adaptability, enabling the organization to be responsive to changing needs.

28. The implementation plan of the human resources strategy foresees a time frame of approximately 18 months, from June 2002 to December 2003. The development of the competency framework, the performance management system and some elements of the career planning framework and staffing policies and procedures are expected to be completed by the end of 2002. UNFPA Representatives and headquarters managers will be informed of the implications of the human resources strategy, and staff at large will regularly be kept apprised of the implementation status of the strategy.

IV. RECOMMENDATION

The Executive Board may wish to approve the human resources strategy for UNFPA contained in this report.

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